

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, TECH, NL
SUBJ: ENRICHMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS: NUCLEAR ADDERS IN THE
POLITICAL GRASS

1. RECENT PLANS TO EXPAND THE ULTRA-CENTRIFUGE ENRICHMENT
FACILITIES IN ALMELO HAVE LED TO A THREAT BY THE RADICAL
PARTY (PPR) THAT ITS TWO MINISTERS WOULD RESIGN. THE
DECISION OF THE TRI-PARTITIE ANGLO-DUTCH-GERMAN CONSORTIUM
WAS TO QUINTUPLE CAPACITY AT ALMELO BY 1983, WITH GON
FINANCING. THE LIMITED CURRENT PRODUCTION IS SOLD TO
ONE DUTCH NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WITH SOME SMALL SPOT SALES TO
GERMANY AND BRITAIN.

2. THE PPR, WHICH HAS ALWAYS HAD A HIGH PROFILE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, HAS VOICED STRONG OPPOSITION BOTH
ON ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS AND BECAUSE OF A GENERAL BELIEF
THAT THE NETHERLANDS SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH
NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. SOME MEMBERS OF THE PPR HAVE EX-
PRESSED CONCERN THAT THE NUCLEAR ENERGY WILL INEVITABLY
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CONTRIBUTE TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

3. MANY OBSERVERS TAKE THE THREAT OF RESIGNATION SERIOUSLY, SINCE IT WOULD ALMOST SURELY CAUSE A CABINET CRISIS WHICH NO ONE WANTS HALF A YEAR BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. THE SMALL PPR, WHICH EVEN MORE THAN THE LARGER PARTIES HAS A HISTORY OF STICKING TO ITS GUNS ON ISSUES OF PRINCIPLE, IS UNLIKELY TO COMPROMISE EASILY AND MAY FEEL ITSELF IN A STRONG TACTICAL POSITION. THE BULK OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PVDA) FAVORS EXPANSION AT ALMELO, GIVING MORE WEIGHT ON BALANCE TO THE FACT THAT THE ULTRA-CENTRIFUGE PROJECT PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT TO 2,500 PERSONS AND COULD OFFER ADDITIONAL WORK OPPORTUNITIES IF ENLARGED AS PLANNED. CDA FEELINGS ON THE WHOLE ARE ALSO LIKELY TO BE IN SUPPORT OF ENLARGEMENT AT ALMELO. THE LIBERALS (VVD) ALSO FAVOR EXPANSION, STILL HARBORING RESENTMENT THAT THE NETHERLANDS LOST OUT THIS SPRING ON THE LARGE ORDER CONNECTED WITH THE DELIVERY OF NUCLEAR REACTORS TO SOUTH AFRICA BY A SWISS-US-DUTCH CONSORTIUM.

4. A RELATED ISSUE IS THE LIKELIHOOD OF A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE ANGLO-DUTCH-GERMAN CONSORTIUM AND BRAZIL FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF BRAZILIAN URANIUM FOR USE IN BRAZILIAN POWER PLANTS. THIS IS LIKELY TO RUN INTO CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION DUE TO THE FACT THAT BRAZIL HAS NOT SIGNED THE NPT. SOCIALIST MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR THEY REGARD THIS AS A TEST CASE WHETHER ONE MEMBER OF THE CONSORTIUM CAN EFFECTIVELY VETO SUCH A DECISION. THEY POINT OUT THAT THE 1970 AGREEMENT AMONG THE THREE COUNTRIES PROVIDED THAT SUCH DECISIONS HAVE TO BE TAKEN IN A COMMISSION IN WHICH EACH OF THE GOVERNMENTS IS REPRESENTED.

5. THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING THAT PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL WILL SOMEHOW MANAGE TO SAIL AROUND THE CURRENT DIFFICULTY. HE MIGHT DO SO SIMPLY BY FAILING TO ACT FOR THE TIME BEING. HIS CALL FOR A FRESH STUDY OF THE PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT AT ALMELO POINTS IN THIS DIRECTION. THE ISSUE OF ENRICHMENT OF BRAZILIAN URANIUM MAY ALSO BE AWKWARD, PARTICULARLY IF IT PITS THE DUTCH AGAINST THEIR BRITISH AND GERMAN CONSORTIUM PARTNERS. IT IS UNLIKELY TO THREATEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE CABINET, ESPECIALLY IF A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT ALSO OPPOSES THE BRAZILIAN CONTRACT. NEVER- THE LESS, THE ALMELO CASE HAS AGAIN DEMONSTRATED HOW EASILY NUCLEAR ISSUES CAN INCITE POLITICAL PASSIONS IN THIS COUNTRY.
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